

Eighteenth Annual

**Symposium
on Computer
Applications
in Medical Care**

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*Transforming
Information,
Changing
Health Care*

Eighteenth Annual

Symposium on Computer Applications in Medical Care

*A Conference of the
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Program Chairman

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Preface

The theme of the Eighteenth Annual Symposium on Computer Applications in Medical Care is "**Transforming Information, Changing Health Care.**" Advances in technology are producing dramatic growth in our ability to transform information from raw data to knowledge, decisions, and actions. In this environment, informatics has become a tool for changing health science and health care. It is not merely a means of doing more efficiently what would have been done in any case. Clinicians and biomedical researchers, armed with better information and greater access to knowledge than ever before, can confront difficult challenges in new ways.

Health science librarians and information service professionals use electronic tools to put knowledge and information at the fingertips of health care providers and researchers. Educators and students have new tools for searching and presenting knowledge. In basic science as in clinical studies, new approaches to acquiring, analyzing, interpreting, and presenting information enable researchers to discover knowledge for significant improvements in health and health care. Increasingly, health care practitioners have the ability to study their own behaviors and to compare their practice with that of others to identify more effective, less costly treatments. Standards and guidelines can be retrieved for consideration virtually wherever and whenever they are needed.

But if current trends in medical informatics are rich with potential, they are also fraught with dilemmas. Transforming the information of health science and health care raises issues related to ethical, economic, and professional conduct. We must respect and protect privacy, information use, and responsibility for research, clinical judgment, and personalized care. With the increasing technological power to transform information comes the vital imperative for the medical informatics community to develop the innovations, implement the systems, and contribute to the policies that will change health science and health care for the better.

SCAMC '94 chronicles these changes and the response of our community. The symposium begins with tutorials on Saturday, November 5 and Sunday, November 6, with material for both novices and

experts in medical informatics. Evening workshops on Saturday and Sunday provide opportunities for participants to discuss shared concerns. Always exciting, the Student Paper Competition on Sunday afternoon scales the heights of excellence. The finalists in this competition present their papers again in regular sessions throughout SCAMC. Monday morning's Plenary Session includes awards and the keynote address by Kathryn Hannah, Ph.D., internationally recognized for her contributions to health informatics. Scientific sessions with papers, theater-style demonstrations, and panel discussions begin after Monday's Plenary Session and continue until noon Wednesday. (The papers in the *Proceedings* are grouped in the same way as in the sessions.) Tuesday morning includes a second Plenary Session, for which the distinguished speaker is C. Everett Koop, M.D., Sc.D., former Surgeon General of the United States. Late Tuesday afternoon is devoted to paper and electronic posters. From Monday through Wednesday, the Exhibit Hall displays the latest commercial applications. Interspersed throughout SCAMC are meetings of the membership and committees of the American Medical Informatics Association (AMIA), Working Group meetings and receptions, and special "'Meet AMIA'" sessions for getting acquainted with and questioning AMIA officers, Board members, and committee representatives. Tuesday evening's SCAMC reception offers fun and relaxation. Wednesday's closing session, organized by the American College of Medical Informatics (ACMI), includes awards for outstanding work presented at SCAMC and a talk by the ACMI Distinguished Lecturer, Nina W. Matheson, M.L., Director of The Johns Hopkins University's Welch Library.

This symposium would not have been possible without the dedicated and expert work of the staff of the AMIA office: Gail E. Mutnik, M.P.A., Executive Director; Jeanne Nevin, M.B.A., Associate Executive Director; Denise J. Herich, Director, Member Services; Ellen Cooper, Consultant, Meetings; Renée Fleurette, Database Administrator; Donna J.B. Barber, Membership Assistant; Debbie Preusse, Accountant; Y. Michelle Daniels, Receptionist. All these people worked unstintingly to give the maximum flexibility to authors, reviewers, and the Program Committee, while still meeting the neces-

sary deadlines. Their graciousness in working long hours cheerfully was an inspiration. The members of the Program Committee gave generously of their personal and professional time, gladly volunteering for work beyond their normal responsibilities; it has been an honor and a joy to work with them: Christopher Chute, M.D., Dr.P.H.; James J. Cimino, M.D.; Reed M. Gardner, Ph.D.; W. Ed Hammond, Ph.D.; Suzanne B. Henry, D.N.Sc., RN; Joyce A. Mitchell, Ph.D.; Alan H. Rowberg, M.D.; Samuel Schultz, Ph.D.; Mary Ellen Sievert, Ph.D.; Roy L. Simpson, B.S.N., RN; Susan Sparks, Ph.D., RN; Robert P. Spena, D.S.W.; and Mark S. Tuttle. Of course the *sine qua non* of SCAMC is the authors who submitted their work and the reviewers who provided thoughtful and constructive critique. They have

my profound thanks, for it is they who give substance, quality, and integrity to the symposium. Finally, my thanks to my colleagues at the University of Virginia and to my family for bearing with my absences and my distraction as I prepared for SCAMC, and for providing the support, encouragement, and irrelevant delights that made the endeavor feasible. Enlightened and inspired by the wisdom and beauty of these people, I deeply hope that SCAMC '94 and these Proceedings may enlighten and inspire others to develop and use informatics to improve health care.

*Judy G. Ozbolt, Ph.D., RN
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